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## A Marxist Perspective on Chinese Reforms: Interview with Jiexiong Yi

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### Introduction

POLITICS IN BEIJING TAKES PLACE on two levels. One level is the frequently obscured calculus of elite politicians formulating policy. The other level is that of theory. While there is a dialectical relationship between the two, parsing their similitudes and contradictions at any given moment is very difficult. While Chinese policies may sometimes be traced to theoretical trends, the reform era has mostly been marked by the supremacy of empiricism and pragmatism over the non-materialist vagaries of pure theory.

Critical theoretical discussions nevertheless remain a vital part of Chinese politics. They take place in the public and academic press, however hamstrung by cultural and political sensitivities as well as outright censorship. More important perhaps are the semi-formal networks of scholars and officials that meet periodically as reading groups, sometimes to discuss censored texts, often to reflect critically on existing and emergent policies.

The most important discussions occur at Beijing University and the Central Party School. The intellectuals invited to attend along with their protégés hold positions of influence and represent particular niche-like theoretical stances. Competitive schools of thought emerge, coalesce, ascend, and decline.

Jiexiong Yi's role as senior professor of Marxism at Peking University is an eminent one in the realm of theory. In addition to authoring more than 200 articles in academic and popular presses, Yi served as chief editor of the *Marxist Philosophy* volume of *The Encyclopedia of China*, 2nd edition (China's "official" encyclopedia). As we will see in the interview, he has supported China's market reforms without losing a critical "dialectical" perspective. This interview originated from lectures delivered in March 2008 at the Brecht Forum in New York City and at Grand Valley State University.

### *The Interview*

Li and Mahoney: *Since we are discussing a Marxist perspective on Chinese reforms, what do you mean by it? What is your understanding of Marxism and its basic texts?*

Yi: First, Marxism expresses a system of values, basically the elimination of the exploitation of workers and all oppression in the pursuit of human liberation. My understanding is largely consistent with the humanist tradition. I am also convinced that society, globally speaking, desires liberation. I am both a Marxist scholar and a scholar of Marxism. Like Marx I see the human experience marching, at times slowly and haphazardly, towards liberation in the way Marx foresaw. Perhaps Europe and particularly Scandinavia have advanced furthest towards the goal, though elsewhere the desire for it might be greater.

Second, Marxism demonstrates a superior way of reasoning or, we might say, a superior way to think about and understand the con-

ditions we face. On the one hand, Marxism is grounded fundamentally in the materialism of "seeking truth from facts," but the "facts," that is history itself, emerge and must be understood dialectically. However limited some Marxists may take them to be, I believe that Western democracies and market economies to date have done a better job accounting for and adjusting to the "facts" than their socialist counterparts. This position is consistent, of course, with the classical Marxist one that views the advance of capitalism, however tragic and ultimately self-limiting, as a provocative, progressive one.

Third, Marxism illustrates both the path we should take and the path we have taken. In all, it is proper to say that Marxism is founded ontologically on Marx's humanist sense of value and shaped epistemologically by the dialectical materialist scientific pursuit of truth. I do not find the scientific and the human to be at odds with one another, but rather mutually reaffirming. Of course, some view Marx as having been only or primarily a humanist, basing their views on the work of the "young Marx," e.g., the 1844 *Manuscripts*, *The German Ideology*, perhaps the *Grundrisse*, and so on. Others draw a line with *Capital* or thereabouts, declaring that the "mature Marx" disavowed humanism for science. Still others, like myself, see three phases: the humanist early phase, the scientific middle one, and a clear return to humanism in his later anthropological researches pursued in tandem with or in lieu of finishing the second and third volumes of *Capital*. But perhaps "return" is the wrong word, as I don't think Marx ever aimed to be more or less scientific or humanistic or that he abandoned one of these for the other. Those who believe he did fail to understand the internal consistency of Marx's thought. Rather, I see his life's work as building a synthesis of both humanistic and scientific traditions that was both natural and necessary to the understanding and advancement of the human condition.

Some in the West have identified Stalinism and its derivations as the most faithful interpretation of Marxism. And yet, it is clear that Stalinism misunderstood Marxism as being primarily concerned with resolving class struggle and establishing proletarian dictatorship rather than more progressive, humanistic goals. Stalin did deploy Marxist humanist rhetoric as a populist appeal, only to abandon popular interests once power was consolidated. Stalin may be a revolutionary to some, but from a Marxist perspective he is little more than a reactionary.

Many if not most Marxist thinkers in both Russia and China, even those who have criticized Stalinism, either vitiate or deny Marxist humanism. They worry, and not without reason, that humanism is merely a bourgeois discourse. Bourgeois humanism, of course, is deceptive hypocrisy as its ultimate design is the protection of private property and exploitative practices. Marxist humanism should be distinguished positively from bourgeois humanism as having a genuine scientific basis in its analysis of modern society, exploitation and so forth. Yet, many neglect this. So thinkers who criticize Stalinism and reject humanism perhaps have much more in common with Stalin than they realize.

If we keep in mind that Marxist humanism affirms and is affirmed by materialism, then we recognize that the movement away from materialism is likewise a movement away from humanism. After all, perhaps Marx's greatest critique of utopianism is its fantastical denial of real, human life. And yet, to excise Marx's humanist values is to deny Marx's fundamental purpose — liberation — and by extension the very reason he pursues at all the "science" of *Capital* and similar works. Would we say that *Capital* presents an abject "science" unguided by humanist values? Or rather that it offers a materialist attempt to describe the material relationships among people? The purpose of *Capital* is to explicate social patterns, to reveal laws of social development, which result in the tactics of class struggle, proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. But the tactics themselves are not the purpose.

*Is it correct to say that Deng Xiaoping Theory remains the dominant guiding thought for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)? Have there been any major innovations or deviations from this?*

Deng Xiaoping Theory remains the dominant guiding thought for the CCP. The changes made to it have not been major. The biggest adjustment has been a "compensation" for two principles somewhat at odds with Marxism, that "practice is the only criterion for truth" and that "development is the last word." While some thinkers singled out these two points as being basic to Deng's theory, often reflecting nostalgia for the radical rupture with Maoism if not with Marxism, such positions represent overstatements by far. These two points contributed to an era where we sometimes paid more attention to

the short term at the expense of the long term, thereby diminishing our historicist and dialectical worldview for smaller, less critical perspectives. As a result — and not surprisingly — during this period we accumulated many new social contradictions, some of them quite acute, between the people and the environment, the economy and society, urban and rural areas, different regions, and so forth, with tremendous impact on social stability and harmony.

Without repudiating Deng's theory, I think that Hu Jintao's ongoing propagation of "scientific development" and the "harmonious society" offers good adjustments to these overstatements. The notion of "scientific development" is more than a Sinification of what elsewhere might be described as "sustainable development," but has at its core the dialectical materialism that is the basis of Marxist science. Appropriately, this concept is paired with the Marxist humanist concept of harmony.

Another change is in leadership style, which, given Chinese history, is quite important. After Mao, Deng stressed modesty and prudence as guiding principles and these values served him well when crafting foreign affairs, curtailing the military, and so forth. I would not say, however, that modesty and prudence have been equally the hallmarks of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao once they consolidated power. Whether this in some way bodes ill for Marxism in China will have to be discussed elsewhere.

*Are those Western commentators who see radical breaks between Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping correct?*

Both in theory and in practice there is indeed a huge difference. On one level, we may say that Mao Zedong Thought is preoccupied with politics while Deng Xiaoping Theory is more concerned with the everyday challenges people face in the real world. Mao Zedong Thought has a tendency towards idealism and dogmatism and is thus susceptible to system building, while Deng Xiaoping Theory attaches little importance to the logical or illogical constraints of systematic thinking. Philosophically, we might say that the chief characteristics of Deng Xiaoping Theory are pragmatism and empiricism, but we should view these characteristics as adjustments made in the wake of the Cultural Revolution. We should not view them necessarily as a confining logic dogmatically applied to new challenges.

On another level, Deng's pragmatism and empiricism involved not system building but a bureaucracy building that ultimately led to the empowerment of one class over another. We might also say that Deng's unwavering insistence on the "four cardinal principles" (including Mao Zedong Thought) resulted in a type of dogmatism. Mao's preoccupation with politics was in fact guided by concern for ordinary workers and fear of bureaucracy. Which position is more faithfully Marxist? Which is nobler? In fact, despite their respective mistakes and political differences, both Mao and Deng were great patriots who were completely committed to China's advancement.

Despite their differences, both Mao and Deng believed ardently in Marxism-Leninism, which, regrettably, is to admit that both were tainted with Stalinism. Nonetheless, perhaps Mao and Deng avoided Stalinist excesses because Stalinism simply did not "fit" China as it did the Soviet Union and because both Mao and Deng were humanists where Stalin was not. Keep in mind that while Deng's reforms led to an increase in class conflict, he recognized and emphasized that excessive polarization would result in failure. Mao, in his various movements to the left, seems to have maintained a similar sense of temperance. When viewed from a wider historical perspective, both leaders helped China advance towards prosperity and social justice.

*In your opinion, has CCP political and economic theory since the opening up in 1978 moved closer to or further away from classical Marxism? Which shifts would you rate as positive theoretical innovations and which negative deviations?*

Since 1978 China has to a certain extent shifted its political philosophical discourse. But this shift has brought us closer to classical Marxism. For example, classical Marxism expresses the relationship between economics and politics, and further, the economic base and superstructure where the latter is determined fundamentally by the former and *only under certain limited conditions* can the latter *shape* the former. Both Stalin and Mao, however, believed that politics and the superstructure could, at any moment, fundamentally determine economics, that they could determine absolutely the economic base. In a word, for whatever reason both Stalin and Mao misunderstood this vital point in Marxist theory and suffered accordingly in practice.

Reforms in China since 1978 have corrected this theoretical error. In terms of practice, however, the record is mixed. Indeed, we

can say that there has been a tendency during the reform era to neglect at times the role of politics and by extension the ability of the superstructure to shape economics and the economic base. This has led to problems that we might otherwise have avoided. For example, while the decline of state-owned enterprises meant abandoning the totalizing concepts of planned economics inherited from Stalin and Mao, the unchecked rise of private entrepreneurs led in many well-documented cases to gross exploitation of workers, and further, the gross corruption of various government departments, officials, destruction of the environment, and so on. We are still struggling to correct these mistakes in practice, but in terms of theory it is all quite clear to us now.

Chinese Marxism during the reform era has made other advances. We have brought critical reasoning back to the table. We have correctly adopted certain Marxist values, followed them *reasonably* and discarded outdated, failed, or failing concepts, however sacred they might have once seemed. We have developed the themes of peace and development and have identified sustainable, scientific development as the main contradiction rather than class struggle.

We have also corrected our sense of historical time. In the past we believed that our economic and social development was ready for the transition to communism, while now we recognize that we are at most merely in the primary stage of socialism. This means that capitalism or at least certain elements of capitalism, including private ownership, a market system, stocks, etc., should be allowed inasmuch as they are necessary for China's advancement. Keeping in mind our pre-reform history, I would say that the CCP has made bold and positive contributions to Marxist theory, however adequate they may or may not be for Chinese historical conditions.

*What have been the greatest achievements and the greatest failures of Chinese reforms in the post-Mao era?*

The greatest achievement of Chinese reforms is the miracle of economic development — miraculous in both Chinese and broader human experience. The greatest failure presents as a number of smaller ones, but they all emanate from the failure of our leaders to demonstrate a correct understanding of Marxist theory, particularly dialectics. Further, our leaders often mistake truth for power and therefore can prove quite closed-minded. Consequently, they have failed to adequately encourage or allow corresponding cultural

reforms. More damningly, they have failed to make the political reforms that should have accompanied the economic, leading to many contradictions, some of these acute.

Without political reforms it has been difficult for us to manage our social system. The lack of democratic and scientific decision-making has led not only to exploitation, but also to various inefficiencies that have wasted much labor. The reform era has actually seen a decline in political freedom and has cultivated political power without popular supervision. Without question this is the chief cause of China's widespread culture of political corruption. These failures have generally hurt most those with the fewest economic advantages and led to serious polarization between rich and poor. These threats to social stability and harmony have led to some measure of dissatisfaction with the Party, which has in turn further threatened social stability.

However, a critical Marxist perspective should also lead us to understand that our achievements and failures are contradictory elements within a dialectical whole. For example, it is unlikely that China would have achieved its economic miracle in tandem with political reform. For the most part, it seems that most in China have been willing to sacrifice political freedom in order to acquire — or at least have a legitimate chance of acquiring — economic wealth. Our leaders, largely guided by their own self-interests, with their understandable fears of free speech, free association, and a free press, have been all too willing to accommodate the Chinese people with this unfortunate trade-off. But should we expect something different? Despite our experiences with Marxism, China remains a rather traditional country, one that is still struggling, culturally speaking, with more than 2000 years of feudal, autocratic rule. Indeed, we have yet to experience a deeply thought liberation movement comparable to the European eras of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

*What are the primary and secondary contradictions facing China today? Has the government and party confronted them?*

The primary contradiction is that between modernity and traditional Chinese culture, which regards Confucianism as its core. Unfortunately, the legacy of Confucianism continues to reinforce our acceptance of hierarchy, of anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian practices. Further, Confucian epistemology is dominated by the idea that harmony is depen-

dent on a hierarchical relationship — the one between heaven and human. The cultural legacy of this sort of thinking, this resort to mysticism, continues to impede our development of science and technology.

The Party is aware of this problem, but its failure or simple inability to advance political reforms has the unfortunate consequence of reinforcing the problem. Frankly, I think the Party and state leaders are not well prepared to help solve this problem for obvious reasons: they have too much to lose personally. Is it fanciful to hope that our people will solve this problem through long-term self-education campaigns to achieve liberated thinking throughout China?

*You have noted elsewhere five contending schools of thought among Chinese Marxists regarding the place of China in Marxist historical time. Please summarize those schools and tell us what the Party believes and which in your opinion is the most correct.*

Of course, this is a very serious discussion and by no means resolved. At the center is an attempt to define in a Marxist sense the nature, place, and so on of China's social transformation or transition. Officially, there is less discussion of these matters and quite a bit more certainty, however spurious, than our debates suggest. The official position, first put forward by the Party congress in 1987, is that China is socialist but at an "elementary stage of socialism," following a "socialist road with Chinese characteristics." Unquestionably, this logic legitimizes certain government policies. For example, it supports the Party's insistence on the "four cardinal principles," which include Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought, though the latter has really been superseded by Deng Xiaoping Theory in tandem with Jiang Zemin's "important thought of the three represents," and Hu Jintao's notions of "scientific development" and "harmonious society."

Further, we are instructed to "keep to the socialist road" by upholding the "people's democratic dictatorship" and the leadership of the CCP. More recently, during the last Party congress of 2007, the four cardinal principles were reaffirmed repeatedly, but we were also told that the consolidation and development of China's socialist system, given the fact that we are still in the elementary stage, would require "unremitting efforts by several, a dozen, or even dozens of generations."

From a completely different perspective, some thinkers, whom we can label the second school, altogether reject the reforms of the last 30 years. In their opinion, the current values attached to "transformation" or "transition" are synonymous with some type of retrogressive restoration of the past. Their basic opinion is that China has restored capitalism and that working people have once again been subsumed by an evil, old society. Their theoretical premise is that Mao developed and established a fairly perfect socialism and that Deng Xiaoping Theory constitutes gross revisionism. They reject the legitimacy of a "socialist market economy" because they believe it is founded inescapably on the premise that private property is sacred and inviolable and therefore leads to unhealthy competition, exploitation and polarization. The primary representative of this school is Deng Liqun, who was once a secretary of Mao as well as a former member of the CCP Central Committee and a leader of the Propaganda Ministry.

The perspective of this second school finds justification in the increase of serious exploitation and polarization during the reform era. As a result of reform, the working and peasant classes — with whose help the CCP came to power — have suffered increased marginalization, politically and economically. Serious corruption has appeared in the ranks of Party cadres and the worst capitalist exploiters have joined the highest circles of power. The second school is rightly concerned about the deepening of social injustice. While some of the facts cited by this school are indubitable, its overall assessment is quite misguided.

The third school is, in some ways, similar to the second. Its adherents also believe that China is in the primitive accumulation stage and that this stage carries elements of bureaucratic and comprador capitalism. However, relative to China under Mao they see the present age as one demonstrating great historical progress. They agree that capitalism has many faults, but they believe it offers the most advanced stage that human beings have invented. The members of this school hold that Stalinist and Maoist forms of socialism were actually peculiar forms of feudalism. Yes, there was some form of collective ownership, but this was actually headed up by unprecedented degrees of despotism, both of which represented extreme developments of feudal society. Therefore, despite the various social costs that they acknowledge, they see the reform era as a largely peaceful transition from feudal society to capitalist society where liberated productive forces have provided historical advance.

This school likewise expresses strong dissatisfaction that China has only promoted economic reform to the neglect of political reform. They want political reform to provide transparency as well as checks and balances, all of which they see as making capitalism stronger and better. They strongly desire a free or freer press. They worry that a failure to pursue such reforms will lead to a disastrous social explosion and therefore threaten or altogether destroy the positive advances we have made since Mao. Those making up this school are primarily liberal intellectuals whose numbers are quite small.

The fourth school holds that the reform era should be understood as an early phase of the transition from the "traditional socialism" initiated by Stalin and Mao to "democratic socialism." Its theoretical starting point is that although the Stalinist and Maoist socialist forms differed from what the founders of Marxism had assumed, especially as regards deficiencies in democracy and humanism, they were still socialist in nature. These thinkers are generally influenced by theorists like Lukács and Gramsci and by the sort of thinking we saw at the Soviet Party congress of 1988. This school's ideal socialism is the democratic multi-party variety found in northern Europe. Therefore, while they endorse the Chinese economic reforms as an important first step, they argue that the next step is to foster a competitive political system, one composed perhaps exclusively of parties committed to socialism bringing forth good governance. Economically, they advocate a mixed economy, *i.e.*, a "socialist market economy," somewhat similar to what we have now, coupled with the implementation of a more progressive and broadly based social welfare system.

This fourth school has many adherents, including many Party glitterati and well-regarded retired cadres. Among these is Xie Tao, the previous Vice President of Renmin University, as well as Li Shenzhi and Li Rui, two of Mao's former ministers. In fact, China's former general secretary, Zhao Ziyang (dismissed during the Tiananmen protests of 1989), also subscribed to this school. Not surprisingly, many in the fourth school believe that the progress of reform has been retarded since 1989.

While some of their points have merit, especially their sympathy with the desire for greater democracy, most people in the fourth school are idealists. They forget the tens of millions of Chinese who are functional illiterates and whose democratic consciousness is seriously lacking. Further, they do not fully grasp the degree of polarization that

exists in Chinese society today, where social contradictions are very acute. Also, while the Chinese economy has grown a great deal, its continued success is by no means guaranteed. Indeed, there are a number of structural weaknesses that would be further exposed and worsened by a radical upgrading of social welfare. Therefore, if their assessment of "what time it is, and what is to be done next" became the dominant position, we might very well encounter the sort of explosion that followed this enlightened approach elsewhere, *e.g.*, the unfortunate Soviet dissolution that followed Gorbachev.

Finally, there is a fifth school, composed mainly of scholars, whose research explores the scientific doctrines in Marxism. They believe that China today is actually in a transitional period, passing from the victory of democratic revolution to socialism. Their theoretical foundation is complex, but we can pick it apart here. Marx and Engels originally assumed that proletarian revolutions would first win victories simultaneously in European countries where the level of capitalist development was very high. After the proletariat took power in these countries, various transitions would take place, including a movement from private to public ownership, the decline or destruction of the exploiting class, the eradication of class distinction, the decline or end of exchange, and so on. Not until all of these changes took place could one claim that socialism had been realized.

Somewhat differently, Lenin believed that such transitions require a much longer period of time than Marx and Engels assumed. However, by the mid-1930s Stalin announced that the Soviet Union had already reached socialism. Of course, this proclamation entailed unsupportable deviation from both Marxist and Leninist thought. Economically, Stalin changed the ownership of the means of production through various schemes of state and collective ownership, destroyed commodity production and exchange, and so on. This, he thought or at least argued, equaled "socialism." With Mao we can say that similar policies were pursued and similar claims made. But the Stalinist and Maoist forms of socialism, to borrow a turn of phrase from Deng, constituted "unqualified socialism." To the contrary, in his assessment of China Deng held that we are still in a transitional stage from the victory of democratic revolution to socialism during which various forms of ownership coexist, where a market economy system is not only permissible but necessary, and so on. In many important ways, this assessment fits the classical Marxist perspective

inasmuch as Marx ascribes a valuable and necessary role to capitalism in the eventual emergence of socialism.

However, straddling such forms of ownership — and straddling this period of time — is quite challenging. To commit oneself simultaneously to socialism and to a market economy seems schizoid to some and “dialectical” to others, but in either case it is required. To wit, the Party and the government must stand by workers and peasants, must promote scientific development and social harmony, and must keep polarization and exploitation in check. The Party should try to ensure that Chinese workers fare no worse — and possibly better — than workers in avowedly capitalist countries.

It should be obvious from my discussion here that I am a member of the fifth school. And despite the mistakes and misunderstandings experienced by the Party, despite its official embrace of the first school, I still believe it to be committed fundamentally to the left and so really at one with the fifth school.

*In 2002, ostensibly as a consequence of his principles of “the three represents” (whereby the Party was deemed to represent the most advanced productive forces), Jiang Zemin stirred controversy when he admitted capitalists into the Party. How did you feel about this? Did it demonstrate the power of the Party over the capitalists or vice versa?*

Jiang combined little to no understanding of theory with an effective public performance. Be that as it may, there seemed to be some measure of public surprise that a Communist Party could or should claim to represent the most productive social forces of a market economy, *i.e.*, capitalism. This is the primary idea in the “three represents.” In fact, this idea is by no means new, as it can be found in the *Communist Manifesto* and even in Mao’s concept, “serve the people.” Indeed, no classical Marxist theorist worth his salt ever said that the Communist Party should only represent the proletariat. Haven’t we always known that truly winning political power and liberating humankind requires a broad united front? I don’t know why any serious Marxist scholar should discuss the “three represents” as a great theoretical innovation.

Despite this criticism of Jiang, we should note something positive on his behalf. He correctly stressed the importance of adjusting certain Chinese policies to meet the rise of the global knowledge

economy. On this matter at least, he was well-informed and did a good job helping China become acquainted with the changing nature of global competition and the importance of becoming knowledge innovators with more education and research.

Jiang allowed private entrepreneurs, including the worst exploiters among them, to join the Party and to have access to or hold outright power at all levels. This resulted, not surprisingly, in a tremendous increase in the embezzlement of state assets and even worse exploitation of workers and peasants in a manner far exceeding that experienced by workers in developed, capitalist countries. In this manner, it is correct to say that Jiang moved too far to the right.

*Hu Jintao was presumably nominated by Deng to succeed Jiang because of the latter's rightist tendency. Has Hu carried out the necessary rectification?*

President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao indeed have signaled and pursued some measure of "restoration," inasmuch as they have demonstrated more concern for vulnerable groups. We can see evidence of this in their implementation of rural tax exemptions, increases in government subsidies for the poor, expansion of compulsory education in both urban and rural areas, introduction of minimum wage standards, establishment of the minimum livelihood guarantee system, and so on. This is not a repudiation of Deng Xiaoping Theory, but after Jiang we may view the Hu era as one that has, thus far, made a number of important adjustments leftward. We have already noted that the notions of "scientific development" and "harmonious society" are simply the methodology and world outlook of dialectical materialism.

*Do you think the reappearance of Confucius in contemporary Chinese political discourse is a tacit admission that Marxism is now a "dead end theory," i.e., one that offers little meaningful insight for China's conditions today?*

It is true that Confucius has returned to contemporary political discourse, but this does not mean that Marxism is or is considered to be a dead end. Rather, we should understand the reappearance of Confucius as a new openness. Confucian thought is deeply embedded in our culture and that we stopped discussing Confucius for many years did little to change this fact. Of course, all of our leaders were born

and raised in China. To a large extent they have been influenced unconsciously by traditional Chinese culture and thus show an acceptance or fondness for what they have not really carefully studied and critically reassessed.

So Confucius has returned to official discourse, but he had never really left the scene in the first place. I see discussions of Confucianism as positive for two reasons. First, having discussions that actually reflect the way many people think demonstrates that the Party has indeed become more open and that its purpose of representing the broader interests of the nation has been met by surrendering the hegemonic position that was previously and inappropriately reserved for Marxism. We might also say that this adjustment in cultural policy reflects a Party with one center but multiple branches, which arrangement accords with the necessity of creating a broad united front.

Second, by discussing Confucianism, by debating its champions and confronting its values, we have a good opportunity to confront the lingering ideological inclination toward dictatorship that affects both our leaders and our people. We should recognize that some leaders might use Confucianism to justify repressive political practices at odds with classical Marxist values. While this sort of thinking would appeal to our previous rulers, I'm not sure that it appeals to our current central leadership after all the progress we have made in returning to Marxist values in the last 30 years.

*What are your thoughts on the future of Marxism in China and throughout the rest of the world?*

Marxism is an effective science of liberation for oppressed and exploited workers. As long as there are exploited and oppressed workers in the world, Marxism will provide a means and method for effective struggle.

The various ruling cliques around the world also have something positive to learn from Marxism. In order to protect their own privileges they will have to make concessions to workers. There are steps forward and backward. For example, we may point to the differences of Roosevelt's "New Deal" from contemporary conditions in America, but on the whole from a Marxist perspective a global trend towards socialism is evident.

Further, I believe an open, global discussion of Marxism is on the upswing and it is my hope that this discussion will keep in mind

three classical principles. First, the road to equality will vary according to the conditions faced by each nation. Second, class struggle may occur, but it is not our purpose. And third, what we value and what we will achieve ultimately is a humanistic advance for humankind.

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